

Costs of New Regulatory Requirements

The costs of providing solid waste services have risen greatly during the past few years. Recent federal regulatory standards and requirements were designed to further reduce the risk of environmental hazards associated with landfilling and incinerating municipal trash. Along with greater protection comes a higher price tag - these federal regulations could increase the costs of constructing new facilities to almost \$1 million per acre. The price of landfills continues even after they stop accepting trash. Local governments owning or operating landfills must demonstrate financial assurance for future closure, post-closure, and remediation costs by setting millions of dollars aside now, by purchasing an insurance policy or letter of credit, or by passing a financial test.

No Longer Just a Public Service

Trash disposal is no longer just a public service to protect the health and safety of local residents. Local governments face increasing demands for new programs like recycling and household hazardous waste collection and increasing competition from the private sector. Local governments are no longer able to guarantee that local waste will go to the local landfill. Without flow control, landfill tipping fees can no longer cover the costs of solid waste services.

Not In My Backyard

Even with greater protections and safeguards, many citizens do not want a landfill near their homes and businesses.

Regionalization

Historically, all counties in Maryland and the City of Baltimore have operated landfills for their citizens' trash.

Due to the increased regulations and associated costs, small landfills are not cost effective. Larger landfills that receive at least 125 tons of trash per day are able to achieve economies of scale. Regionalization provides other benefits as well - pooling of resources, reduction in duplicative services, access to previously unaffordable programs and technology, and increased flexibility in siting new facilities.

Kent, Caroline, Talbot, and Queen Anne's Counties have successfully joined together and use the Mid-Shore Regional Landfill to dispose of their region's trash. Each county will host a landfill for only twenty of the next eighty years.

MDE's Solid Waste Initiative

The Solid Waste Initiative is MDE's efforts to assess the statewide generation and disposal of solid waste and to develop a strategy for dealing with the State's trash.

Through this Initiative, MDE commissioned a study entitled "Regionalization Opportunities and Barriers." MDE also provided training workshops for county public works and financial staff on financial assurance and financing and regionalization of solid waste services.

The Initiative's other activities included: surveying counties on their ability to meet federal financial assurance requirements; development of a long-range statewide solid waste management strategy; and, further outreach and training for State and local officials.

The Solid Waste Initiative was completed in 1996.

Need more information about MDE's Solid Waste Initiative? Call (410) 537-3314.

Maryland Department of the Environment
1800 Washington Blvd
Baltimore, MD 21230
410-537-3000 • 1-800-633-6101